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TAGS: [MARR](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [MCAP](#) [MOPS](#) [NATO](#) [RS](#)  
SUBJECT: CSTO: RUSSIA'S COUNTER TO NATO

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[1](#)B. 06 MOSCOW 7909

Classified By: POL M/C Alice G. Wells for reasons 1.4 (b/d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. Russian observers see the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) as a potential counter to NATO influence, particularly in Central Asia. The reintegration of Uzbekistan into the organization in 2006 gave it a much-needed shot in the arm. CSTO leaders, while wary of NATO influence, seek NATO recognition -- and are displeased that the Alliance has thus far refused to engage institutionally with CSTO. Russian observers also see CSTO as a counter to Islamist extremism and, though unstated, to growing Chinese penetration of Central Asia and potential domination of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization. The GOR funds a majority of CSTO expenses and provides preferential prices on arms sales to member states. CSTO could also serve as a cover for a regional force to quell instability in one of the member countries, such as in the event of a breakdown in Uzbekistan or Belarus. End Summary.

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HISTORY  
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[1](#)2. (U) The CSTO, founded in 1994, is based on the 1992 Collective Security Treaty. Current members are Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan; its Secretary General is Nikolay Bordyuzha, a Russian national. Former CSTO members Azerbaijan and Georgia, along with Uzbekistan, withdrew from the CSTO in [1](#)1999. Uzbekistan rejoined the CSTO in 2006, largely in reaction to Western criticism following the events in Andijon in May 2005.

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LIMIT NATO'S INFLUENCE  
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[1](#)3. (C) Russia is determined to develop the CSTO to be a viable alternative to NATO in resolving regional security issues, Ivan Safranchuk, from the Moscow office of the Center for Defense Information, told us. Russia would like to see the CSTO develop into a capable security organization that would limit NATO's influence in former Soviet space. He speculated that if member states continued to integrate their security structures, CSTO could become a capable counterbalance to NATO at least in Central Asia. However, Safranchuk told us, security coordination in the CSTO was no easy task. For example, Belarus' security concerns were far removed, both politically and geographically, from those of Central Asian member states. The CSTO, Safranchuk said, was "no son of Warsaw Pact."

14. (C) Sergey Oboznichev, from the Institute for Strategic Studies and a CSTO advisor, told us member states believed the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) was a failure and saw NATO enlargement into the former Soviet Union (FSU) as potentially destabilizing. Oboznichev added that the CSTO was strongly supported by an "anti-NATO group" in Russia's State Duma. This group perceived the CSTO's goal as thwarting NATO and U.S. actions outside areas of their traditional influence. They viewed U.S. bases in Central Asia as particularly irritating. Oboznichev said these Duma members were also annoyed that some CSTO members participated in NATO's Partnership for Peace program.

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... BUT GET NATO RECOGNITION AND RESPECT  
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15. (C) Safranchuk told us that despite concerns about NATO influence in the CIS, the CSTO strongly desired NATO recognition. He said CSTO members were increasingly irritated by NATO's refusal to talk or meet with them. In a recent public comment, CSTO Secretary General Bordyuzha lamented the fact that the CSTO had not received any response from NATO to its requests to discuss cooperation. Bordyuzha noted that there were opportunities to work together on non-proliferation, export control, border management, and assistance in Afghanistan. Bordyuzha concluded that "it will apparently take time to alter NATO's mentality." Pavel Zolotarev, Deputy Director of the Institute of Canada and the USA, told us that NATO should recognize CSTO in order to enhance cooperation in counter-terrorism and anti-drug trafficking in Central Asia, an oft-heard refrain from MFA

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officials in the European Cooperation Department (responsible for NATO-Russia issues).

16. (C) Safranchuk said the CSTO was attempting to develop its infrastructure to mirror NATO. This would include: a charter that commits members to coordinate foreign, defense, and security policies; creation of a foreign ministers' council; a secretariat in Moscow; and a military staff in Bishkek. In public remarks, Bordyuzha has cited the recent creation of an inter-parliamentary assembly of member states as another major accomplishment. Formation of a joint peacekeeping force was next on the agenda for the CSTO, according to Bordyuzha. The CSTO also has a NATO-style Article 5 requiring mutual defense of a member state in the event of aggression.

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NOT ALL ABOUT NATO  
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17. (C) The CIS Institute's Andrey Grozin told us CSTO had legitimate concerns that were not just driven by NATO enlargement or aimed at undermining U.S. influence. He said CSTO members were focused on the spread of Islamic fundamentalism in Central Asia, citing Islamic incursions into Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan in 1999-2000. Grozin noted that some Russian analysts in 2001 anticipated a war with the Taliban. He also said Russia had strong economic interests in Central Asia, which Russia, through the CSTO, was determined to defend.

18. (C) The CSTO has attempted to increase coordination with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Russia, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan and China). The SCO and CSTO share many of the same members and have overlapping objectives. Recently, however, the SCO declined a CSTO request to participate in the SCO's "Peaceful Mission 2007," an operational-tactical training exercise. Viktor Livkin of RIA Novosti attributed this to China's disinterest

in diluting its leadership position in the SCO through cooperation with another organization.

¶9. (C) Aleksandr Sharavin of the Institute for Political and Military Analysis told us that China had entered the "great game" in Central Asia through the SCO and wanted to increase its influence in this region at Russia's expense. He noted that China had expanded bilateral relations with several Central Asian states without Moscow's "approval," which he said had irked some in the Kremlin. Sharavin concluded that China, the dominant member in the SCO, had no interest in working with a rival organization controlled by Moscow.

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CSTO: CONSOLIDATE RUSSIAN INFLUENCE  
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¶10. (SBU) Along with Moscow's goal to consolidate its hold on former Soviet states, Russia cultivates the CSTO to provide a structure capable of promoting Moscow's interests and influence. In a recent interview, Chief of the Russian General Staff Yuriy Baluyevskiy said that collective security enabled Russia to uphold its interests in the post-Soviet space and to strengthen the "belt" of stability on the perimeter of the CSTO.

¶11. (C) Safranchuk told us that Russia funded the majority of CSTO-related training and provided arms to CSTO partners at domestic Russian rates. Such a strategy, he argued, has allowed Russia to keep CSTO members in a state of semi-dependency, underpinning increased Russian influence in member states' domestic and foreign policy. Safranchuk called the CSTO a "Putin Project" to unite those states that had similar security concerns in the FSU.

¶12. (C) Carnegie Moscow Center's Aleksey Arbatov told us that Russia could use the CSTO as political cover for Russian influence in Belarus or Uzbekistan. In Uzbekistan, for example, Russia could avoid direct intervention by supporting the Uzbek regime with command and control capabilities and weapons. CSTO Secretary General Bordyuzha cited Uzbekistan's re-joining the CSTO as one of the organization's major accomplishments in 2006. CIS Institute Grozin told us it was a win-win situation for both parties: For the CSTO, Uzbekistan was an ideal member due to its isolation from the West after the events in Andijon. Uzbekistan, with mostly

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outdated Soviet-era weapons systems, looked forward to discounted Russian weapons purchases and military training opportunities with Russia, Grozin told us.

¶13. (C) Regarding Belarus, Arbatov speculated that support for opposition figures by a NATO member state, such as Poland, or a potential NATO member, such as Ukraine, might encourage Lukashenko to request Russian assistance through the CSTO despite current tensions between Minsk and Moscow. Last year, Secretary General Bordyuzha said, the CSTO was prepared to conduct negotiations between the Government of Belarus and opposition leaders if the situation in Belarus became destabilized (Ref A).

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COMMENT  
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¶14. (C) Russia sees the CSTO as a useful tool to increase its influence in Central Asia, particularly in states such as Uzbekistan, shunned by the West. A multilateral approach lends Moscow more leverage to pursue its policies on Russia's fringes. NATO enlargement and U.S. missile defense deployments in Europe play to the classic Russian fear of encirclement. That, and a conviction that NATO and U.S. inroads come at Russian expense, will continue to drive Moscow to strengthen multilateral defense ties wherever it can and to shore up relations in traditional areas of

influence.  
BURNS